



State of Illinois  
Office of  
Lieutenant Governor  
**Sheila Simon**

# Rural Counties Newsletter

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

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## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

Next Quarterly  
Governor's Rural  
Affairs Council  
(GRAC) Meeting  
is Wednesday,  
January 18, 2012.  
Check  
[www.ltgov.il.gov](http://www.ltgov.il.gov) for  
more details.

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## Message from Lt. Governor Sheila Simon

Greetings!

Welcome to the first edition of the Rural Counties Newsletter. As chair of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council (GRAC), I am working to ensure rural Illinois has access to state government resources. This quarterly newsletter is designed to provide information regarding programs and funding opportunities available to rural communities throughout our state.

In the future, we plan to share stories of rural citizens who are making a positive impact in their communities and keep you updated on what the GRAC is doing to improve the lives of rural citizens. Be on the lookout for how you can nominate a Rural Champion in the coming weeks. Feel free to contact my office if we can be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,

Sheila Simon, Lieutenant Governor



## SAVE THE DATE

The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) will be holding its  
**2012 Rural Community Economic Development Conference**  
on March 7 and 8, 2012. Visit [www.iira.org](http://www.iira.org) for more information.

## School and District Efficiency Survey

*Do you have ideas regarding how public schools and districts can be more efficient?*

With the expectation of continued budgetary challenges for P-12 education in Illinois, the *Classrooms First Commission*, chaired by Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon, is collecting innovative and practical ideas for improving school and district efficiency while preserving and enhancing classroom learning opportunities for students.

We believe that the public has much to contribute in terms of providing the Commission with useful ideas for educational opportunity and efficiency.

Suggestions may address individual schools, districts, multiple districts, collaborations among school district and other organizations, regions, or the state as a whole.

The more survey responses the Commission receives, the more informed its recommendations will be.

Please access the survey at the link below to submit your idea(s):

[www.ltgov.il.gov](http://www.ltgov.il.gov)

# Governor Quinn Launches \$78 Million Initiative to Support Small and Start-Up Businesses

*Advantage Illinois to Provide Access to Capital for Businesses and  
Entrepreneurs to Create Jobs and Grow the Economy*



*Information courtesy of DCEO*

Governor Pat Quinn recently launched the Advantage Illinois program that is designed to provide Illinois businesses and entrepreneurs with access to the capital they need to start new companies and expand existing business. Advantage Illinois will leverage \$78 million in federal funding that will allow businesses to bring innovative ideas and new products to market and accelerate job creation and economic growth in Illinois.

“Advantage Illinois will help Illinois businesses of all sizes increase innovation and competition, and expand and create good-paying jobs,” Governor Quinn said. “In order to boost our economy, create jobs and compete in the global marketplace, we must provide businesses and entrepreneurs with the tools they need to grow.”

The Advantage Illinois program is comprised of three program components to spur institutional lending, and one program

to leverage private venture capital in start-ups and high-growth businesses:

**Capital Access Program (CAP)** assists businesses with various financing needs. It is designed to encourage financial institutions to make loans to small and new businesses that do not qualify under conventional lending policies.

**Participation Loan Program (PLP)** supports businesses with projects that create or retain jobs and/or modernize their businesses to improve competitiveness. One component of the program is devoted to Minority/Women/Disabled/Veteran-Owned businesses (MWDV PLP). The state purchases and subordinates part of the loan to help mitigate lender risk.

**Collateral Support Program (CSP)** establishes savings accounts or CDs that provide cash collateral support to lending institutions to enhance

the equity and/or loan collateral levels of small business borrowers.

**Invest Illinois Venture Fund Program (IIVF)** is a new venture capital program to support young, innovative companies in Illinois that show high growth potential, can demonstrate their place in the market and already have other investors.

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) will be actively enrolling lending institutions that will, in turn, provide financing to businesses utilizing the CAP, PLP and CSP components of the program. Businesses will be able to begin accessing loans to use these funds when they have completed the appropriate paperwork with a participating lending institution. Program guidelines, including lender applications, and a regularly updated list of participating banks will be available at [www.ildceo.net/AdvantageIllinois](http://www.ildceo.net/AdvantageIllinois).

# Assistance to Rural Community Water Supplies (CWS)

*The Illinois EPA provides financial and technical assistance to rural community water supplies to help them meet their obligation to provide safe drinking water to rural consumers.*

## **Small System Compliance Grant Program**

Illinois EPA recently awarded nearly \$2 million in grants to 18 small communities across the state to repair and improve their public drinking water systems. All of the communities had experienced difficulty in achieving compliance with Safe Drinking Water standards. Due to their size and limited resources, these small communities do not have the funds readily available to perform the necessary corrective actions on such long-term infrastructure projects. The non-compliance issues for the proposed grant awards include arsenic violations, unsafe source waters, and inadequate pressure tanks. Project costs range from \$5,222 to \$200,000 based on the scope of the proposed project. Under the Small Systems Compliance Grant (SSCG) program, a community water supply is eligible for fund-

ing if it meets the definition of a small system, i.e., one that serves 100 service connections or less, *or* has less than 400 people, *and* has an unresolved Violation Notice or other compliance problems. Priority was given to SSCG applicants based upon the severity of their non-compliance issues, the impact of the project on the water system customers, and the ability of the facility to achieve compliance with the funds offered.

## **Low-interest Loan Program**

The Illinois EPA makes loan awards to community water supplies to upgrade their treatment and distribution infrastructure to meet federal and state safe drinking water regulatory requirements. In recent years, the financing terms have included not only the usual favorable financing of less than market rate interest, but also 0% interest rates and principal forgiveness on many loans. In FY 09-10, 59 loans

were made to rural communities totaling \$100.8 million in financial assistance.

## **Technical Assistance**

The Illinois EPA routinely evaluates rural community water supplies for efficacy in providing a safe and adequate water supply to their consumers. To ensure the safety of Illinois water consumers, the Illinois EPA completes engineering evaluations and provides technical assistance visits to water supplies as frequently as resources allow. As part of this process, the Illinois EPA works diligently with consumers, students and other citizens to help them understand the general requirements placed on drinking water systems to assure the safety of Illinois water supplies. Staff place a high priority on responding to questions regarding water supplies and take great pride in assisting these systems in optimizing their water quality.



*Information  
courtesy of IEPA*





#### Rural Affairs

401 S Spring Street

Stratton Office Bldg—Rm 414

Springfield, IL 62707

Phone: 217-558-3085

Fax: 217-558-3094

E-mail: [christina.rogers@illinois.gov](mailto:christina.rogers@illinois.gov)  
or [laura.kessel@illinois.gov](mailto:laura.kessel@illinois.gov)

[www.ltgov.illinois.gov](http://www.ltgov.illinois.gov)

Under the Illinois Constitution, the Lieutenant Governor is first in line to succeed the Governor if he or she is unable to discharge the duties of the office. Over the course of Illinois history, six Lieutenant Governors have replaced Governors who died, resigned or were removed from office. The Lieutenant Governor's diverse daily duties are derived from the Governor, Legislature, statute and personal initiative. Lt. Governor Simon is leading efforts to improve our schools, rural areas, military bases and waterways.

As the point person on education reform, Lt. Governor Simon serves as the chair of the Classrooms First Commission and the Joint Educational Leadership Committee of the P-20 Council, and is a member of the state's Performance Funding Committee. Simon also serves as chair of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council, the Illinois River, Mississippi River, and Wabash and Ohio Rivers Coordinating Councils and the Interagency Military Base Support and Economic Development Committee, and is the ambassador to Illinois Main Street.

## IL Department of Agriculture Programs

### Community Gardens \* IL Wine Industry \* IL Products

The Illinois Department of Agriculture has initiated a Community Garden beginning with 65 gardeners and growing to over 100 this year at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. Also in partnership with the Illinois Products Farmers Market the garden donated 50,000 pounds of food to the Central IL Food Bank and the garden also saved the state money on manure removal by using a portion for composite offered free of charge to any gardener.

The Illinois Wine industry also continues to flourish with 450 grape farmers with 1,115 grape bearing acres currently. Additionally, over 200,000 + visitors and \$319 million impact on Illi-

nois' economy is attributed to the 96 wineries in Illinois. The Department also helps the industry grow in terms of grant money for viticulturalist and researching ways to expand the wine industry.



*Information courtesy of IDOA*

The Department continues promotion of the "Illinois Products" and the "Where Fresh Is..." Logo programs as well. The programs

identify Illinois products in various retail establishments-- from major grocery stores to local community farmers markets. Participates can submit an application for these programs to the department and we will work for the companies/vendors.

Beyond the logo programs, the department hosts Illinois food products expos and this year in March in Springfield, more than 6,500 consumers were in attendance along with 80 Illinois food companies selling their products. The result was over \$115,000 in products sold over the one and one-half day show.